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Les Bell (2007) **Perspectives on Educational Management and Leadership**
(Continuum Studies in Education)

Continuum International Publishing Group ISBN 9780826488312 £70 (Hardcover)
214 pages

Reviewed by Deirdre Torrance, University of Edinburgh

This book is a unique collection of Professor Les Bell's work focusing on educational leadership and management, spanning four decades. Les Bell is Emeritus Professor of Education at the School of Education, University of Leicester. The book explores key themes and issues in educational leadership and management with a premise that through understanding how policy has developed, we are in a better position to respond to current and future educational policy. Structured in three main parts, this exploration tracks the development of educational policy and its trends, the impact of emergent themes on staff in schools within organisational cultures, and the impact on leadership and management in primary schools.

Although focusing on the English educational leadership and management context, Les Bell situates English policy development within the international context, comparing and contrasting specific aspects with a range of countries (Scotland even merits a mention!). As such, the global influences on contemporary policy are made clear. Thus, despite the unique attributes each education system has throughout the world, the commonalities between them become clearer. In Scotland, we like to think of ourselves as distinct from UK education policy with our separate legislative framework, institutional apparatus and breadth of curriculum yet must recognise the 'cross-national trends' (explored in Humes and Bryce, 2003).

I approached this book with a degree of apprehension. It was, after all, in hard back and bound with a 'serious' cover. The topic for discussion would not be appearing under the top ten most saucy titles. It was also unlikely to appear on the Richard and Judy book list. However, I was pleasantly surprised at the upbeat tone maintained throughout what is a serious exploration of a complex area. The factual and theoretical aspects are located in real school contexts, drawing on a range of research, reported in a very accessible manner. And that is it in essence, this book despite its serious subject matter and unavoidably academic nature, is accessible. It should prove invaluable to anyone within the field of educational leadership and management who seeks to understand how we have arrived at the policy context we find ourselves and seeks to develop an informed view of how far such policy should impact on the specific context of a school – the interconnectedness of policy and practice.

References

Humes, W. and Bryce, T. (2003) 'The Distinctiveness of Scottish Education' in
Humes, W. and Bryce, T. (eds) *Scottish Education: Second Edition Post-Devolution*.
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.